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C O N F I D E N T I A L GUATEMALA 001078

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SUBJECT: CHIEF HOMICIDE PROSECUTOR ANNOUNCES RESIGNATION

REF: GUATEMALA 1056

Classified By: Ambassador Stephen McFarland for reasons 1.4(b,d)

¶1. (U) Alvaro Matus, Chief Prosecutor of the Homicides Unit of the Attorney General's Office, announced August 20 that he will resign effective September 1. Matus cited personal and professional reasons for his decision. Reportedly, new Attorney General Velasquez had called for his resignation.

¶2. (U) Matus, who served in the Attorney General's Office for 14 years, will be the seventh senior official to resign from that office since the July 29 resignation of former Attorney General Juan Luis Florido (reftel). Matus participated in the investigation of special cases, such as the September 2006 Pavon prison raid, and high-profile cases, including the February 2007 murders of three Salvadoran representatives to the Central American Parliament (PARLACEN), the subsequent killings of four policemen suspected of committing the crime, as well as the April 2008 murder of Victor Rivera, former senior advisor to the Minister of Government.

¶3. (C) On August 19, CICIG Commissioner Carlos Castresana told visiting DRL Assistant Secretary Kramer and Poloff that Matus "clearly colluded with organized crime," and that he was among a list of corrupt officials in the National Civil Police and the Attorney General's Office whom he had recommended to President Colom for removal but offered no supportive evidence. He noted that since Florido's removal several people within and outside the Attorney General's Office have come forward with information. Castresana stressed, however, that CICIG took no part in removing Florido or selecting the new Attorney General.

¶4. (C) Comment: Embassy had a good, collaborative relationship with Matus in cases involving the murder of American citizens. While questions remain as to whether Matus obstructed justice in the PARLACEN case, Embassy law enforcement offices have no indication that he was involved in the PARLACEN murders, and Castresana has not specified the source of information regarding Matus' alleged ties to organized crime or the extent of his involvement. Civil society has high expectations that the changes in the Attorney General's Office will improve the performance of this key player in Guatemala's justice sector.
McFarland